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SUBJECT: SPLM ANNOUNCES NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTIONS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: From January 14-20, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Polit-Buro (PB) met to review candidate selections and nominations. While the discussions were reportedly tense at times, the PB has publicly announced their candidates for president, governors and the legislative assemblies. Members of the PB told us that they believe the SPLM will do very well in the upcoming elections. Members of the Nuer ethnic group were significantly underrepresented among the gubernatorial nominees. However, Secretary General Pagan Amun told us that the SPLM will make other concessions to them in the nominations for the legislative assemblies. Amun also told us that in order to mitigate local tensions over nominations, the SPLM are trying to ensure all SPLM nominated candidates get involved in the campaigning for governors. End Summary.

YASIR FOR PRESIDENT!

¶2. (SBU) While the announcement of SPLM Deputy Secretary General Yasir Saeed Arman for president came as a surprise to many, Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong and the SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun assured us that the decision was made after considerable discussion and planning. Biong told us that there was a lot of thought put into making the decision. He explained that Yasir's recent involvement in the passage of the three key outstanding laws had impressed GOSS President Salva Kiir and many within the SPLM. GOSS Representative to the U.S. Ezekiel Gatkuoth told us that Yasir's name was the third nomination for president after Blue Nile Governor Malik Agar and SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun. Amun told us that the decision to nominate Yasir was based on his credentials as a popular SPLM figure, Muslim, Arab and could, in the SPLM's view, "beat al-Bashir."

¶3. (SBU) Biong agreed with this assessment, but intimated that other factors were also at play. In Biong's view, Governor Agar had to run in Blue Nile in order to "save" the state for the SPLM and ensure that the popular consultations called for under the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) take place. Biong felt similarly about Abdul Aziz in Southern Kordofan, stating it was more important for the SPLM to win the gubernatorial races. (Note: Recent press reports claim that the SPLM will boycott Southern Kordofan elections, although post has not been able to confirm that with SPLM leadership). Biong told us that Amun was too easy a target for the NCP, who would knock him for not being Muslim or Arab. Biong explained that while the SPLM had wavered about putting forth a candidate, the "arrogance" of the NCP when it

demanding the SPLM not field a presidential candidate, forced the SPLM to choose a viable option. All agreed that it was key that Yasir was from the north, not only to win the election, but because he would be able to hold on to the presidency after the referendum, regardless of the outcome.

14. (SBU) While the majority of SPLM believe that they have a strong candidate in Yasir, they did acknowledge the need to build alliances in the North. Biong admitted that the SPLM would probably need to look into coalition building, but thought that they probably would not enter into any firm pacts until after the first round of voting, which he added Yasir would have no problem getting through. Amun agreed that the SPLM would need to seek allies in the north, but did not specify who the SPLM was considering, while Ezekiel said the SPLM were already speaking to Umma Party leader Sadiq al-Mahdi and others in the north. Amun did admit to meeting with a Sudan Liberation Movement Abdul-Wahid's faction (SLM/AW) delegation in Juba recently to discuss possible coalitions in Darfur and claimed that Abdul Wahid was planning to travel to Juba in the near future to discuss a coalition with the SPLM further (Note: The SPLM has been reporting that Abdul Wahid will "soon" return to Sudan for several months now).

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Governors Races Are Very Close

15. (SBU) The governors' nominations were very competitive throughout Southern Sudan and resulted in a number of tense and disputed decisions. Problems began in some states with the establishment of electoral colleges and nomination processes from the capitals. There have been appeals and complaints to the SPLM Secretariat about these processes. Biong admitted that thus far the SPLM have not handled the complaints processes well and are looking for ways to resolve the controversies.

16. (SBU) In Unity State in particular, an electoral college was never established, when opposing SPLM factions within the state could not agree on its makeup. During the PB meeting in Western Equatoria, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Jonglei, Unity and Central Equatoria, governorship candidates were chosen by secret ballot. While many believed the vote in Unity would be close, Ezekiel told us that the incumbent Governor Taban Deng secured 15 of 27 votes, while candidate Joseph Mongtuil supported by the Vice President Riek Machar and Paulino Matiep only secured 6 votes. However, the PB decided in order to quell tensions over the nomination, legislative nominations in Unity would be split fifty-fifty between the two factions. The unpopular incumbent governor of Central Equatoria, Clement Wani, won by one vote to the dismay of many within the SPLM. The situation in Jonglei was also initially tense between incumbent governor Koul Manyang and Minister of Energy and Mines John Luk Jok; however Jok was compensated for not hindering the SPLM gubernatorial candidate with a the legislative nomination for Akobo, Jonglei.

17. (SBU) Amun explained that the SPLM made terrible decisions in Central Equatoria and Upper Nile, but he believed that the SPLM will be able to secure the other eight states in the south, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, and possibly a governorship in Darfur and Khartoum. He plans to try to mobilize those candidates that did not secure the SPLM nominations to support the gubernatorial nominees, acknowledging that the SPLM would then owe the individuals positions after the elections. Amun told us that he

did see a imbalance with the gubernatorial nominations, with only two Nuer candidates securing the nominations -- in Upper Nile and Unity States. He explained that the SPLM was trying to ensure better ethnic balances through its nominees for the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA).

18. (SBU) Comment: The nomination process has not been easy for the SPLM, and many believe there are even more difficult times ahead. Angelina Teny, State Minister of Energy and Mining in the Government of National Unity (GoNU), who comes from a prominent Nuer family as wife of Riek Machar has already declared her intention to run an independent campaign against the SPLM gubernatorial candidate in Unity state. We do not expect to see additional independent candidates from erstwhile SPLM heavyweights who felt short changed by the nomination process since the nominations process closed on January 27. On the Presidency, we view Yasir Arman's odds of being elected long at best.

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